DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 323 011 PS 019 015

AUTHOR Brookes, Carolyn
TITLE Multi-Age Grouping: A Strategy for Reducing Truancy of At-Risk Children.
PUB DATE Aug 90
NOTE 60p.; Master's Practicum Report, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Attendance Patterns; *Curriculum Development; *Elementary School Students; Grade 1; Grade 2; Grouping (Instructional Purposes); *Kindergarten Children; *Nongraded Instructional Grouping; Primary Education; Program Descriptions; Summer Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Developmentally Appropriate Programs; *Multi Age Grouping

ABSTRACT

An early childhood resource teacher implemented a practicum intervention designed to improve the school attendance of at-risk kindergartners and first and second graders in a low-income, inner-city area in central Florida. The intervention involved the transformation of self-contained, graded classrooms into primary units comprised of multi-age groups of children. In conjunction with the practicum, a similar pilot program was implemented in two other elementary schools. The goal of the primary unit at each school was to provide a developmentally appropriate program in a classroom climate that fostered a sense of belonging, developed self-confidence, and encouraged positive dispositions for learning. Evaluation data indicated that 18 percent of the students improved their attendance by an average of 7 percent. It is concluded that multi-age grouping enhances students' self-concept, improves their school sentiment, allows them the opportunity to learn at their own pace, and frees them of the shameful experience of failing a grade. Appendices provide data on students and surveys and evaluation instruments. (RH)

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MULTI-AGE GROUPING: A STRATEGY FOR REDUCING TRUANCY OF AT-RISK CHILDREN

by

Carolyn Brookes

A Practicum Report

Submitted to the faculty at the Center for the Advancement of Education at Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

The abstract of this report may be placed in a National Database System for reference.

August 1990

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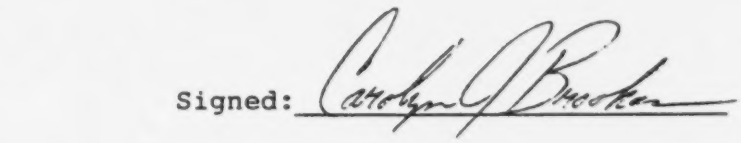
Abstract

Multi-Age Grouping: A Strategy for Reducing Truancy of At-Risk Children
Brookes, Carolyn J., 1990: Practicum Report, Nova University
The Center for the Advancement of Education
Descriptors: At-Risk Students/ Attendance/ Early Childhood Education/ Elementary Education/ Dropout Prevention/ Self-Concept/ Student Attitudes/ Truancy/ Underachievement/ Ungraded Primary Programs/ Young Children

An innovative intervention program with the goal of improving the attendance rate of targeted at-risk kindergarten, first grade and second grade students is described. Multi-age grouping was implemented as a strategy to positively affect the high absentee rate as well as the motivational and disruptive problems associated with the identified students. Eighteen percent of the students improved their attendance by an average of seven percent despite the fact that the time implementation was brief and attendance during the summer program was not mandatory. The greatest improvement, however, was noted in the areas of school sentiment and self-esteem. Figures are included comparing the pre- and post-responses in these areas. As a result of the study, it was concluded that multi-age grouping is a viable strategy which enhances students' self-concept, improves their school sentiment, allows them the opportunity to learn at their own pace, and frees them of the shameful experience of failing a grade. Appendices include student data, surveys and evaluation instruments.

Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own; however, it would not have been possible without the support, encouragement, and active involvement of my mentor and friend, Sarah Sprinkel. When it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other professionals in the field and in the hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Signed: 

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Student's Name Carolyn Brookes

Program Site Orlando Date August 1990

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(please print---------and sign)

Observer's position Principal Phone # 407-422-6480

Observer's comment on impact of the project (handwritten):

Any project study, activity or program that can shed light or provide assistance or opportunity in improving self-concept, reducing absenteeism and/or increasing parental and community involvement in the school, is encouraged and solicited.

Table of Contents

		Page
Title Page		i
Abstract		ii
Authorship Statement		iii
Observer's Verification		iv
Table of Contents		v
Chapters		
I.	Purpose	1
II.	Research and Solution Strategy	8
III.	Method	17
IV.	Results	24
V.	Recommendations	31
Reference List		33
Appendices		
Appendix A:	Discipline Information	35
Appendix B:	Composite Test Scores	37
Appendix C:	Attendance Summary for Identified School	39
Appendix D:	Teacher Observation Checklist Kindergarten	41
Appendix E:	Teacher Observation Checklist First Grade	43
Appendix F:	Teacher Observation Checklist Second Grade	45
Appendix G:	School Sentiment Survey	47
Appendix H:	Initial Teacher Survey	49
Appendix I:	Parent Letter	51
Appendix J:	Registration Form	53
Appendix K:	Critical Thinking and Self-Reflection Checklist	55
Appendix L:	Teacher Log	58
Appendix M:	Parent Survey	60
Appendix N:	Self-Evaluation	62
Appendix O:	Final Teacher Survey	64

CHAPTER I

Purpose

Background

The 23rd largest school district of the more than sixteen thousand districts nationwide was the setting for this practicum. The identified Central Florida district, the fifth largest in the state, has a growing population that is both mobile and ever evolving.

The school district, comprised of 75 elementary schools, 18 middle schools, 10 high schools, five alternative/exceptional schools, and four adult vocational technical schools throughout the 1,003 square mile area, serves 112,403 students. More than 45,000 of these students are enrolled in the county's 75 elementary schools.

The elementary schools in the district include kindergarten through fifth grade. Twenty-one elementary schools also have one or more prekindergarten classes.

The district level elementary team is comprised of a consultant and one or more resource teachers in

each of the subject areas (i.e., Reading and Language Development, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Art, Music, Media and Early Childhood). The author of this practicum is currently serving as one of the three early childhood resource teachers at the district level.

Holding a bachelor of arts degree in elementary education and a Florida teacher's certificate in elementary education grades one through six and primary education grades kindergarten through third, the author has taught a variety of grade levels during the sixteen years in education. Four of these years were spent as an assistant director of a private school specializing in children ages six through sixteen with learning disabilities.

The targeted school, the oldest elementary school in the district, is located in the inner city area and is surrounded by a predominately low socio-economic residential area. Eighty-five percent of the families qualify for free or reduced lunch, and 97 percent of the children attending the targeted school live within an eight block area and walk to school.

The school has an enrollment of 550 students in prekindergarten through fifth grade. Of the 250 males and 300 females, the school's population consists of twelve percent Caucausian, 85 percent Black, two percent Hispanic, and one percent Asian/Pacific Islander.

The school is staffed by a principal and a faculty composed of 23 classroom teachers, 21 females and two males. The teachers are assisted by classified personnel such as aides, custodians, secretaries and cafeteria workers. There is one curriculum resource teacher, one guidance counselor, one media specialist, one teacher of the emotionally handicapped, one part-time speech teacher, one part-time compensatory education teacher, and three Chapter I teachers. The instructional staff consists of 70 percent Caucausian, 25 percent Black, and five percent Hispanic. One third of the staff has a post-graduate degree and one-third is currently working toward a post-graduate degree.

Problem Statement

The selected school is located in an area in which education is not generally valued. Many of the adults living in the surrounding neighborhood community never finished school.

Over the years the selected school has experienced a high rate of disruptive behavior exhibited schoolwide (Appendix A:35), test scores consistently below the district and national average (Appendix B:37), and a high absentee rate as compared to the rest of the county (Appendix C:39). During the 1989-90 school year the school had only a 92 percent attendance rate as compared to a 96 percent

attendance rate for the district's elementary schools.

There is a genuine concern for those truant students who are identified as needing preventative strategies in order to be successful. The target group for the practicum, therefore, was kindergarten, first grade and second grade students who were identified as receiving at least one preventative strategy in the areas specified on the Teacher Observation Checklist and Student Educational Plan for Kindergarten, First Grade and Second Grade (Appendices D:41, E:43, F:45) within the last 45 days of the 1989-1990 school year. Such identification indicates a need for another teaching style, technique, or activity to be used in order to help the student be successful.

The principal and staff, realizing the seriousness of the truancy problem, have established as one of their goals to implement a classroom guidance program as well as utilizing the expertise of the school level Student Assistance Team, which is made up of members of the school staff trained to help identify students and families that are experiencing conflict and problems in the home and to help find ways to overcome those problems. Twenty-two high-risk students and their parents are involved in an intensive program designed to prepare students and their families for coping with their environment both in school and out of school.

As a result of these measures, active membership in the Parent Teacher Association (P.T.A.) has increased over 200 percent since the arrival of the current principal three years ago. However, although the attendance at P.T.A. meetings has increased, student attendance still remains a problem. The targeted students, the very ones who need to be in school, were in school only 89 percent of the possible days of attendance during the 1989-1990 school year as compared to the district-wide average of 96 percent.

Although a seven percent discrepancy seems small, it is critical considering the target students. Absenteeism has been identified as one of the factors leading to students dropping out of school. Absenteeism contributes toward students falling behind academically which often leads to students leaving school before completing high school. With an alarming 58 percent of students not completing high school, Florida is reported to have the highest dropout rate in the nation. The State Department of Education, therefore, is looking to identify and encourage policies which raise the expectations, performance, and motivation of socio-economically and academically disadvantaged students.

Since absenteeism has been linked directly to academic deficiencies and dropping out of school, it is important that the attendance of the targeted students improve. If the attendance rate of these students can improve at

the elementary level before missing school becomes a routine carried into the higher grades, the targeted students' chances for completing high school should improve tremendously.

It was the author's objective, therefore, through this practicum to design an intervention program which would improve at least 25 percent of the targeted students' attendance rate by seven percent or more.

Outcome Objectives

The outcome objectives for this practicum at the conclusion of the implementation period were:

1. As a direct result of the implementation strategy, at least 25 percent of the target students' attendance rate would increase by seven percent or more. This objective was measured by comparing the percentage of days the targeted students attended school during the 1989-1990 school year and the percentage of days the same students attended school during the summer session.
2. Eighty percent of the students involved in the summer program at the identified school would possess a more positive attitude regarding school attendance. This objective was measured

by comparing the students' pre- and post-responses to items # 1, 12, 15, and 20 on the School Sentiment Survey (Appendix G:47). The criteria used to determine an increase in positive attitudinal change was at least one more positive response on the post-questionnaire for items # 1, 12, and 20.

3. An indirect result of the implementation strategy at the identified school would be a 50 percent improvement in self-image of the students involved. This objective was measured by comparing pre- and post-responses to items # 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 17, and 19 on the School Sentiment Survey (Appendix G:47). The criteria used to determine an increase in positive self-concept was at least one more positive response on items # 17 and 19 of the post-questionnaire.

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

Nationwide one in four students drops out of school before graduation and the achievement of minority students still lags significantly behind that of white students, despite a decade of gains. Up to 40 percent of all junior high students and 60 percent of senior high students probably have trouble with academic reading materials; as many as two-thirds of the 17 year-olds still in school run the risk of becoming marginal due to inadequate writing skills; one in 10 secondary students gets suspended from school; and about one third of all pupils achieve below grade level (Ghory and Sinclair, 1987).

Poverty greatly influences educational attainment, and one of every five children in the United States today lives in poverty. The National Association of Business further reports that only 43 percent of black youngsters and 53 percent of white youngsters who come from poor homes ever graduate from high school (NJEA Review, 1990).

According to Ryan (1980), the pressure to educate the disruptive student and to prevent increased absenteeism and drop out rates has led to greater demands for developing

alternatives.

Absenteeism, according to Englander (1986:3), is expensive in terms of academic achievemnt, economic loss to school districts, and teacher efficiency. Most importantly, however, truancy is expensive because it is a lost opportunity to rehabilitate a large number of distressed youngsters.

Englander (1986) further revealed there is little in the literature of school truancy to challenge the fact that school response to deviancy often serves as a stimulus to more deviancy. Therefore, the reported treatments which employ some form of coersion (i.e., calling parents, detentions, suspensions, corporal punishment, expulsion and referral for court action) are questionable.

In a survey of school administrators in Yolo County, California home problems and ineffective parents were seen as the two major factors underlying poor school attendance. The third factor checked by over one-half of the surveyed principals as contributing to truancy was the child's feelings of social inferiority through rejection by other students and a lack of friends. Other contributions were difficulty of school work, parental devaluation of schooling, and the child's disinterest in subjects of study. The same survey given to the social workers and probation officers of Yolo County resulted in similar information.

Parent ineffectiveness was most often mentioned along with two additional causes: that the schools need an expanded curriculum and course content to meet the needs of a broader range of students, and that peer influence played a major role in truancy, especially in the junior high school years. Lack of success was frequently mentioned as one of the major contributors to truancy (Somer and Tyburczy, 1981).

According to Ryan (1980), numerous studies investigating the reasons why youth become disruptive, truant or dropouts have generally concluded that school-aged youth become alienated from education when there is no emotional investment or personal involvement in the process.

In response to these concerns, A Nation At Risk (1983) was published calling for school reform. The publication resulted in policy changes for public education with a major emphasis on "tightening up" the functioning of schools through a combination of higher standards, more uniform requirements, increased accountability and new incentives to force students and staff to work harder. As a result, states increased curriculum requirements, added resources and increased salaries, improved public knowledge about student and school achievements and added time to the school day. In response to these reforms, preschool, kindergarten and primary grade teachers reported an increasing use of standardized tests, worksheets and

workbooks, ability grouping, retention and other practices that focused on academic skills too early and in inappropriate ways.

Right From the Start, a 1988 report of the National Association of State Boards of Education, suggests that the next phase of school reform should support new classroom and teaching models from a basis of the characteristics of children at different stages of development. The report suggests that due to a high variability of rates of development, when academic work and introduction of basic skills is introduced too early, some children will inevitably fail and feel incompetent and distrustful of their ability to cope with a school setting. Research has examined and questioned the effectiveness of ability grouping and the use of tests of academic performance to retain children early in their school career. Such findings have generated considerable support for alternative policies and approaches.

Ghory and Sinclair (1987) found that the school environment is the force that contributes to students becoming marginal and at the same time it is a resource for correcting marginal behavior. The study suggests that if schools do not provide a variety of settings and a relatively flexible approach to variation among students, marginality is more likely to become a serious problem.

According to Anderson (1987:45), "recent research on effective schools and effective management practice compels us once again to attempt to set up schools, classes, pupil groups, and promotion policies that help to unlock the creative potential of children and their mentors."

Visible signs of public education's ills - low student achievement on international assessments, drop out rates that reach 50 percent in some of the nation's cities, teacher dissatisfaction, bureaucratization - are worrisome, given demographic and economic trends mandating that public schools educate to a higher level of success students who have traditionally presented the most challenges (Ryan, 1989).

The National Governors Association (NGA) has developed a framework for school restructuring similar to that expressed by many experts, and as one part of the restructuring process NGA says that curriculum and instruction must be modified to support higher-order thinking by all students. Also use of instructional time needs to be more flexible, learning activities must be made more challenging and engaging, and student grouping practices should promote student interaction and cooperative efforts (O'Neil, 1989).

According to Ghory and Sinclair (1987), the more intractable problems of school learning are most effectively

addressed at an early age when the relationship between individual and school environment first becomes problematic.

Anderson (1987) further suggests that the essential organizational structure would feature a combination of nongradedness, multi-age pupil groups, cooperative teaching linked with differentiated staffing, and flexible, shared space. Within such a structure, any rational curriculum would have a far greater chance to succeed, and policies that respect children and nurture their growth could have a far more positive impact. No body of research or of carefully analyzed experience disproves the validity of such a structure. An abundance of evidence, on the other hand, suggests that the conventional structure should be modified.

Ryan's study (1980) of 14 selected programs for reducing truant and disruptive behavior in schools revealed several different approaches and resulting programs. Among the tools utilized in these programs were behavior modification using tokens, in-school tutoring, in-school suspension, team teaching, adult advisers from the community, basic skills development, cross-age tutoring, student involvement in classroom management, the school-within-a school concept, group counseling, mini-courses, and adventure education.

Because of the nature of the children and families

of the identified school, the practicum author feels multi-age grouping is a viable strategy to positively affect the high absentee rate as well as the motivational and disruptive problems associated with the identified students.

Multi-age grouping, sometimes referred to as multi-grading, is a classroom organizational structure in which students of different ages are placed together in classrooms without consideration of their levels of ability or achievement. A typical multi-age classroom spans two or three years although occasionally more ages are grouped together. Multi-age grouping is often used in secondary schools, particularly for small elective classes, but it is unusual to find multi-age classes at the elementary level (Way, 1980).

Research on the impact of multi-age grouping on students' cognitive and social skills is sparse, but it is an area which is currently witnessing a great deal of interest. According to Johnson (1987), American educators of today have segregated children on the basis of age, perhaps because of the belief that same-age classrooms are best suited to needs of young children, however, given the developmental significance attributed to peer socialization and the unique adaptational advantages children might derive from multi-age versus same age socialization, multi-age programs offer tremendous hope

for early childhood education.

According to Cohen (1989), many schools experimented with ungraded classes in the 1960s, often unsuccessfully. But the concept is drawing renewed attention today as a way of curbing ability tracking and grade retention. Goodlad and Anderson, as cited by Cohen (1989), suggest that the ungraded model is particularly beneficial for minorities, boys, underachievers, and low-income pupils.

Many schools in British Columbia, according to Cohen (1989), now have ungraded K-3 units, and the provincial government, acting on the recommendations of a royal commission on education reform, has mandated such units for all primary schools by 1990. The plan would extend the continuous progress model through the upper grades by the year 2000.

Pratt (1983) concluded from the results of his study that segregation of children into narrow age cohorts is a recent departure from social patterns existing for millions of years; increasing the variance in age of instructional groups does not appear to threaten the welfare of any pupils; and interaction among individuals of differing ages appears to confer certain affective benefits.

The results of Way's study (1980) indicate that the multi-age grouping skeptics' fear that achievement will suffer when children of different ages are in a multi-age

classroom was unfounded. Achievement in multi-age classrooms was no different from achievement in single-age classrooms while the higher scores for children in multi-age classrooms on the happiness and satisfaction factor seemed to indicate that multi-age classrooms provide an atmosphere of contentment.

Johnson (1985) also found that placing students in multi-age classes did not seem to affect their achievement. Students in the multi-age conditions did, however, perceive themselves as engaging in more individualistic behavior, had a greater sense of being able to accomplish anything they try, and perceived themselves as being more motivated to learn the assigned material than did their counterparts in the homogeneous age conditions.

Through a comparison of an experimental and a control school, Milburn (1981) found that multi-age groups made little difference in basic skills achievement (with the exception of vocabulary building which was higher in the multi-age groups). However, multi-age grouping did seem to engender positive attitudes toward school.

Because the practicum author believed that this positive attitude toward school would be a determining factor in decreasing the high absentee rate of the targeted students at the identified school, multi-age grouping was selected as the solution strategy.

CHAPTER III

Method

In an effort to increase the attendance rates of targeted students at the identified school site, the classroom structure was changed during the 1990 summer program from that of self-contained kindergarten, first grade and second grade classrooms to those of Primary Units, comprised of multi-age groupings of children.

In conjunction with this practicum, a similar pilot program was also implemented in two other elementary schools. The goal of the Primary Unit in each of the school sites was to provide a developmentally-appropriate program to provide an intellectually stimulating environment that would help students extend their knowledge and skills within an atmosphere that fostered a sense of belonging, developed self-confidence, and encouraged positive dispositions for learning.

Specific objectives of the implementation were:

1. Participating teachers would be certified in Early Childhood Education or Elementary Education.
2. Each student would be viewed as a unique person with an individual pattern and timing of

growth and students would be allowed to move at their own pace in acquiring skills.

3. The curriculum would be integrated so that students' learning in the traditional subject areas would occur primarily through projects and learning centers that teachers planned and that reflected students' interests and suggestions.
4. The integrated curriculum would be used so as to take optimum advantage of the students' natural abilities, interests, and enthusiasm for learning.
5. The curriculum would encourage higher-level thinking skills and provide relevant opportunities to incorporate problem-solving techniques.
6. The students would model the teacher's enthusiasm for learning while identifying with the teacher's attitudes toward conscientious work.
7. The teacher would provide positive guidance techniques by setting clear limits in a positive manner; involve students in establishing rules and use problem-

solving techniques with misbehaving students.

8. The teacher would encourage students to evaluate their own work and determine where improvement was needed and would assist students in figuring out for themselves how to improve their work.
9. Each student's progress would be assessed through observation, and samples of the student's work (or copies thereof) would be kept in an individual portfolio.
10. A professional development opportunity would be provided to participating teachers before implementation to help them become more confident, competent and creative.

In preparation for the implementation, selected teachers met with the practicum author and the Early Childhood Team with the purpose of writing a curriculum based upon an integrated thematic approach, which would be used in the multi-age classrooms as well as in age-grouped classrooms across the district. The writing team made a concentrated effort to include a wide variety

of techniques and strategies which would encourage critical thinking skills on the part of students of all ages (see the accompanying curriculum guide).

Following the editing and revision of the curriculum, all necessary materials and supplies were ordered for the 220 teachers districtwide. A distribution date was scheduled with the district warehouse, at which time a representative from each of the 65 participating schools, including the identified school, would come to pick up the materials.

After reviewing the philosophy, goals and objectives of the proposed implementation with the practicum author, the principal of the identified school selected three teachers to teach the multi-age classrooms.

The three teachers then met with the practicum author. The philosophy, goals and objectives of the implementation were discussed; the Initial Teacher Survey (Appendix H:49) was completed; and the curriculum was reviewed.

Letters and registration forms (Appendices I:51 and J:53) were sent to the parents of students who were receiving a preventative strategy in at least one of the areas listed on the Teacher Observation Checklist and Student Educational Plan (Appendices D:41, E:43, F:45). Following receipt of the registrations, the principal

formed three heterogeneously-grouped multi-age classrooms.

The practicum author met with the three teachers on the first pre-planning day to help arrange the classrooms in order to facilitate the implementation of the curriculum.

During the five-week period, the practicum author observed the implementation and served as a resource for the teachers. The Critical Thinking and Self-Reflection Checklist (Appendix K:55) was used when observing in an effort to document the degree to which critical thinking skills were encouraged. The three areas which consistently reflected the need for more teacher awareness and inservice opportunities were having the students set objectives for their own learning; utilizing questioning techniques to avoid short or one-word answers; and allowing students to work collaboratively without an abundance of teacher talk and direction.

Teachers were encouraged to use the optional Teacher Log (Appendix L:58) or some other system of identifying the areas in which each student was receiving a preventative strategy as a method of monitoring students' progress. The teachers reported that although they saw progress in some of the areas of concern, they did not feel that the five-week period was adequate time to observe and mark the area as completed. They felt that the teacher for the following school year would be better able to observe

and evaluate the progress over a longer period of time.

Teachers also kept a sample of each student's work from both the first and the last week in order to assess the student's progress. Again, the teachers felt that the amount of time did not reflect significant progress although they expressed an interest in adopting the individual portfolio system during the regular school year as a method of evaluating progress.

Parent surveys were suggested by the teachers as a method of receiving feedback from the parents. As a result, the teachers and the practicum author designed a parent survey (Appendix M:60), which was sent home during the last week of the program. The surveys were overwhelmingly positive. Comments ranged from "He never liked going to school, but he wanted to go every day this summer" to "Hopefully this program may help alleviate some of the tension and pressure which minority children and underskilled children acquire during the regular school year, and hopefully they will gain a sense of belongingness and confidence and self-respect. I believe this is the key to any personal success."

The students completed a School Sentiment Survey (Appendix G:47) on both the first and last day of the summer program. A comparison of the pre- and post-surveys may be found in Chapter IV.

A self-evaluation (Appendix N:62) was also completed by the students. The original was taken home to the parents and a copy was placed in the student's cumulative folder. While the self-evaluations, in general, reflected a positive experience for the majority of the students, the teachers were surprised at the hesitancy of many of the children in evaluating their own progress.

The author and teachers met to discuss and assess the results of the implementation. The resulting list of advantages, disadvantages and recommendations will be found in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

Results

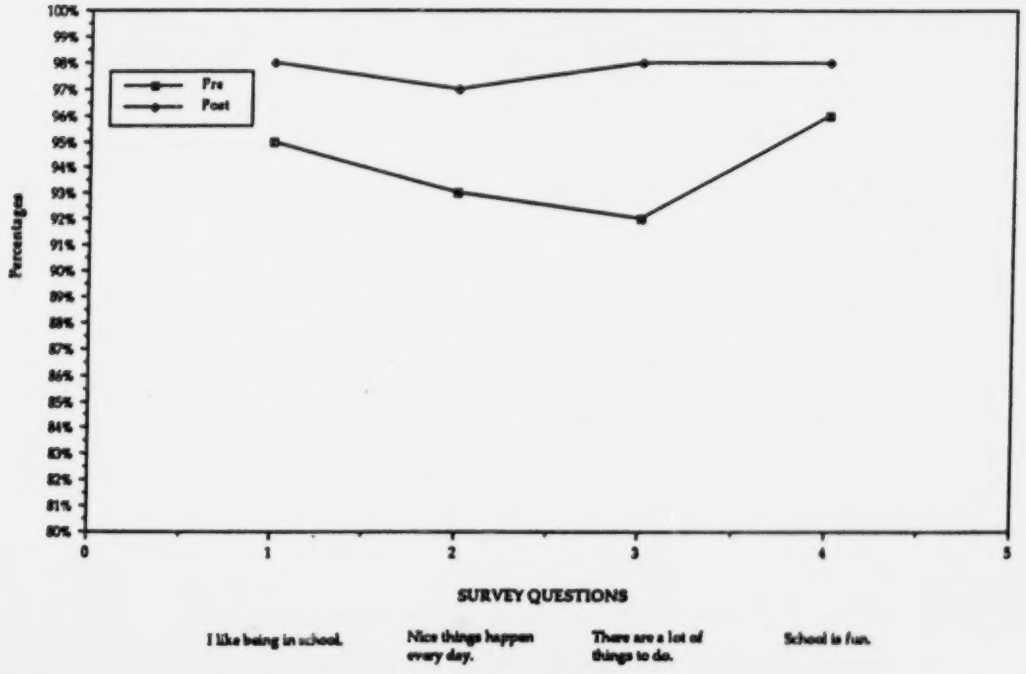
The first objective of the study was to increase at least 25 percent of the target students' attendance rates by seven percent or more. Despite the fact that attendance is not mandatory during the summer program, 18 percent of the students improved their attendance by an average of seven percent as a result of the implementation. While the average 75 percent daily attendance rate during the summer program was less than the 89 percent attendance rate during the school year, it is important to note that one day of absence during the summer program reflects the same percentage rate as nine days of absence during the regular school year.

Upon reviewing the computer printouts itemizing individual absentee rates of the targeted students, it was noted that 45 of the 71 students missed less than five days; 28 students were absent one day or less, and only two days reflected a tardy for the entire group during the summer program as compared to 582 days during the school year! Forty-nine percent of the students improved their attendance rate - some dramatically! For example,

one student who had been absent 26 days and tardy 14 days during the regular school year had 100 percent attendance with no days tardy during the summer program. Another student who had been absent 62 days and tardy 21 days was absent for four days of the summer program and was not tardy on the days attended.

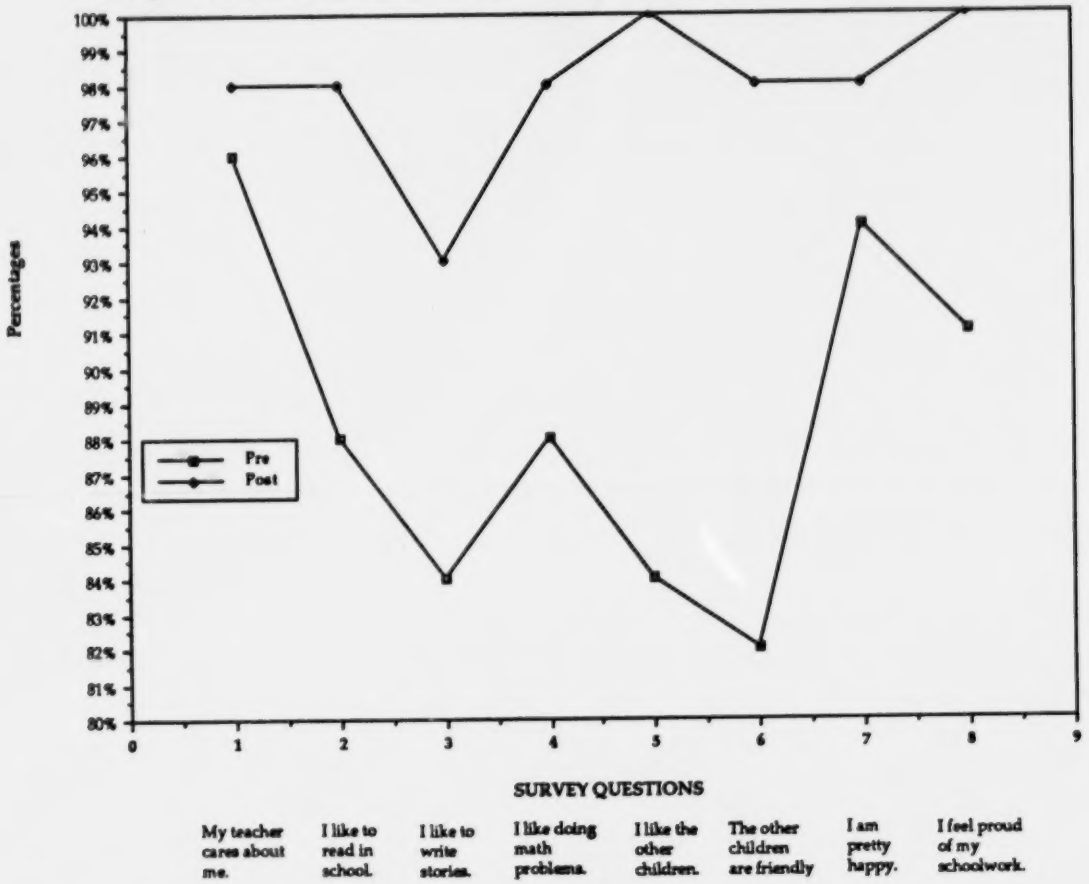
The second objective of the implementation was to have 80 percent of the students possessing a positive attitude regarding school sentiment. After comparing the students' pre- and post-responses to items # 1, 12, 15 and 20 on the School Sentiment Survey (Appendix G:47), it was found that every one of the aforementioned items reflected a more positive response as reflected in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1
Comparison of Pre- and Post-Responses Reflecting School Sentiment for the Target Group



The accomplishment of the third objective, which was to improve self-image by 50 percent, was determined by comparing the pre- and post-responses to items # 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 17 and 19 of the School Sentiment Survey (Appendix G:47). At the conclusion of the study, a more positive response was recorded for each of the above-specified questions as shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2
Comparison of Pre- and Post-Responses Regarding Self-Esteem of the Target Group



The degree to which self-esteem was enhanced was also reflected in the parent surveys (Appendix M:60), the teachers' final surveys (Appendix O:64), and the teachers' general observations. The following comments were representative of the comments made to the author by the participating teachers during the course of the study.

> "At the end of the first day I went up to the office and I was raving about two of the students in my class: how wonderful they were and how bright! The people in the office shared that this was not the normal situation with these children. It was really nice for them to get the chance to be the 'all stars' in the class and help other children and be successful."

> "I had a lot of second graders in my class. These are the kids who don't shine as far as reading goes. Every day they would go over and take a book off the shelf and ask if they could read to the group. They weren't shy about it; they felt really confident getting up, reading and showing the pictures. The little ones thought they were just wonderful because these kids could read!"

The following comments on the parent surveys in response to the question "Do you feel your child made progress this summer?" also reflected an improvement in self-image and school sentiment:

> "Yes, because she is more interested in doing her school work at home. I work with her on her numbers, but now she just comes home and does it herself."

> "Yes, he never liked going to school but he wanted to go every day this summer."

"Yes, she is talking more and I can understand her. She loves to learn!"

"Yes, he is more open with his personality."

"Yes, because she is reading more."

"Yes, he gained confidence in his ability. Thank you!"

"Yes, he seems to talk more and seems to be more alert and pay more attention."

"Yes, I hope you continue to offer this program. My son hates school, but he really liked summer school."

"Yes, I think Cindy will be more confident and positive towards school in general. Hopefully,this program may help alleviate some of the tension and pressure which minority children and underskilled children acquire during the regular school year. And, hopefully, they would gain a sense of belongingness, confidence and self-respect; I believe this is the key to any personal success!"

The following list of advantages and disadvantages of multi-age grouping, which was generated by the participating teachers during the final meeting with the practicum author, reflected the tremendous impact of the program in the affective areas of school sentiment and self-esteem.

Advantages

Built self-esteem
Increased cooperation
Afforded opportunities for peer tutoring
Provided modeling
Provided leadership opportunities
Increased social interaction

Improved social skills
Enhanced independence with increased responsibility
Demonstrated the effectiveness of the children's control of the learning
Increased creativity
More individual attention could be given to more children
Children had feeling of importance
Developmental needs could be more easily met
Allowed more flexibility
Children had more enthusiasm
Teachers got to know the children much better than in years past
Better attendance - even after the Fourth of July!
Less tardiness
Children were able to play off each others' strengths
More teacher satisfaction
Teacher became a facilitator
Less discipline problems
Non-competitive, supportative climate (for children and teachers)
More student-initiated independent work both at home and at school
Children felt there was a purpose for learning
The team teaching approach increased cooperation and sharing; teachers felt less isolated
Increased feelings of self-worth, empowerment and importance on the part of the children
The curriculum emphasized that the child <u>is</u> the curriculum.

<u>Disadvantages</u>

Parent perceptions and attitudes
Not challenging enough for older children
Evaluation and accountability difficult
Difficult to be aware of each child's specific academic skills
More preparation time was required for teachers

The teachers felt that the disadvantages noted during the summer program would be alleviated quite easily during the regular school year by virtue of the time factor. It was a general concensus of the group that nineteen days

was not enough time to observe and evaluate academic progress, but that during the regular school year such observation and evaluation would be possible. The degree to which the teachers could see improvement in the affective areas of school sentiment and self-esteem during the short period of time was surprising to the majority of the teachers.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

After reviewing the results of the implementation of the multi-age grouping during the summer program, a district committee is being formed to plan and prepare for implementation of multi-age grouping in three of the district's elementary schools during the 1991-92 school year.

The committee will be comprised of the district consultant for Early Childhood, the principals of each of the three schools involved in the summer study including the school identified for this practicum, a teacher from each of the three schools, and the practicum author.

The committee's mission during the 1990-91 school year will be to study the results of this practicum and recommend a structure and system by which multi-aged Primary Units would be established in each of the three schools. The goal of the Primary Units will be to encourage a more developmentally appropriate curriculum and structure in order to better meet the individual needs and learning styles of the students regardless of their innate intellectual capacities. Such units would be designed

to help students extend their knowledge and skills within an atmosphere that would foster a sense of belonging, develop self-confidence and encourage positive dispositions for learning. Having students remain with the same teacher in the Primary Unit setting for a three to four year period would allow students the opportunity to learn at their own pace, free them of the shameful experience of failing a grade, enhance their self-concept, improve their school sentiment and instill a desire for continued learning.

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APPENDIX A

DISCIPLINE INFORMATION

1988-1989

	Counseling	Detention	Parent Contact	Suspension at School	Suspension at Home
Class Disruptions	146	37	56	32	12
Disrespect for Others	110	34	36	20	4
Fighting*	82	17	35	31	21
Harassment	23	2	18	8	3
Intimidation	18	1	12	3	3
Property Destruction	6	0	0	0	0
Obscene Behavior	25	1	6	6	2
Other	40	11	16	7	2

*Corporal punishment was administered by the principal to five male students (four black, one white) for severe problems relating to fighting.

APPENDIX B

Composite Test Scores

COMPREHENSIVE TESTS OF BASIC SKILLS

Percentage of Students At or Above Grade Level

1989

	School	District	Nation
Reading	34	58	50
Language	35	61	50
Mathematics	46	70	50
Science 4-5	28	64	50
Social Studies 4-5	35	60	50

STATE STUDENT ASSESSMENT TESTS

Composite Scores for Grades 3 and 5

	School 1986	School 1987	School 1988	School 1989	District 1989
			THIRD GRADE		
Reading	84	95	86	87	94
Writing	81	89	84	81	92
Mathematics	78	89	85	85	92
			FIFTH GRADE		
Reading	71	84	76	86	88
Writing	84	84	83	87	90
Mathematics	68	76	69	77	86

RPT: SAPR200-1 COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS PROCESSED- 04/18/90 PAGE-3
ATTENDANCE SUMMARY TIME- 08.28.55

BY SCHOOL
LINE 1 - FEMALE
LINE 2 - MALE

-----WHITE-----			-----BLACK-----			---HISPANIC----			-ASIAN/PCA ISL-			---AM INDIAN---			-STD-	-FEMALES & MALES-			STD
TOT	PRES	PCT%	TOT	PRES	PCT%	TOT	PRES	PCT%	TOT	PRES	PCT%	TOT	PRES	PCT%	AVG	TOT	PRES	PCT%	TOT
34	28	88.80	208	195	91.51	9	7	88.84			*			*		251	232	92.00	
51	48	88.80	234	218	92.24	4	4	98.57	1		95.00	2	1	80.00		293	272	92.00	
																		92.00	544

TOTAL SCHOOL AVERAGE IS 92.00

TEACHER OBSERVATION CHECKLIST AND STUDENT EDUCATIONAL PLAN

NAME _____ TEACHER _____ SCHOOL _____ GRADE K DATE _____

CHECK AREAS OF CONCERN		Checks	DATES: Projected Completion	Update	Update	Completion	STUDENT EDUCATIONAL PLAN (SIEP)
MOTOR	Gross motor coordination - jumping, hopping balancing, skipping						__ Audio-Visual Aids _____ __ Commercial Kit _____ __ Worksheets/Workbooks __ Centers __ Games __ Manipulatives __ Other _____
	Fine motor--cutting, pasting, folding, coloring, pencil grip, drawing, writing						
	Copying/spacing--shapes, numbers, letters, words						
	Other						
VISUAL	Visual discrimination--matching						__ Audio-Visual Aids _____ __ Commercial Kit _____ __ Worksheets/Workbooks __ Centers __ Games __ Manipulatives __ Other _____
	Visual memory--pictures, shapes, colors, sizes, numbers, letters, words						
	Sequencing--pictures, colors, numbers, letters, words						
	Other						
AUDITORY	Auditory discrimination--sounds/words						__ Audio-Visual Aids _____ __ Commercial Kit _____ __ Worksheets/Workbooks __ Centers __ Games __ Manipulatives __ Other _____
	Following oral directions						
	Auditory memory--sounds, letters, words, sentences, numbers						
	Other						
LANGUAGE	Personal information--name, age, address, birthday, phone number, parent name						__ Audio-Visual Aids _____ __ Commercial Kit _____ __ Worksheets/Workbooks __ Centers __ Games __ Manipulatives __ Other _____
	Abbreviated language/one-word response						
	Appropriate responses						
	Vocabulary--verbal, sight						
	Grammatical structure--oral						
	Other						
SOCIAL EMOTIONAL	Communication with peers/adults						
	Works independently/uses time wisely						
	Participates in activities/withdrawn behavior						
	Disruptive/inappropriate behavior						
	Self-image						
	Attention span						
	Completes work						
	Other						

*Recommended Strategies (check one or more): Enrichment ☐ Developmental ☐ Preventative ☐

1/PREP/113.29
07/16/84

PS-1082

NAME _____ TEACHER _____ SCHOOL _____ GRADE 1 DATE _____

CHECK AREAS OF CONCERN		Checks	DATES: Projected Completion	Update	Update	Completion	STUDENT EDUCATIONAL PLAN (SIEP)
MOTOR	Gross motor coordination--jumping, hopping, balancing, skipping						__ Audio-Visual Aids _____ __ Commercial Kit _____ __ Worksheets/Workbooks __ Centers __ Games __ Manipulatives __ Other _____
	Fine motor--cutting, pasting, folding, coloring, pencil grip, drawing, writing						
	Spacing--shapes, numbers, letters, words						
	Copying--book to paper/board to paper						
	Other						
VISUAL	Visual discrimination - matching						__ Audio-Visual Aids _____ __ Commercial Kit _____ __ Worksheets/Workbooks __ Centers __ Games __ Manipulatives __ Other _____
	Visual memory--pictures, letters, words, sentences, numbers, color						
	Reversals/omissions/substitutions						
	Sequencing--pictures, letters, words, sentences, numbers						
	Omissions in writing/reading						
	Other						
READING	Word attack						__ Audio-Visual Aids _____ __ Commercial Kit _____ __ Worksheets/Workbooks __ Centers __ Games __ Manipulatives __ Other _____
	Vocabulary--verbal, sight						
	Comprehension						
	Other						
LANGUAGE	Personal information--address, phone, parent name						__ Audio-Visual Aids _____ __ Commercial Kit _____ __ Worksheets/Workbooks __ Centers __ Games __ Manipulatives __ Other _____
	Appropriate responses						
	Verbal expression						
	Grammatical structure--oral/written						
	Written expression						
	Other						
AUDITORY	Auditory discrimination--sounds/words						__ Audio-Visual Aids _____ __ Commercial Kit _____ __ Worksheets/Workbooks __ Centers __ Games __ Manipulatives __ Other _____
	Following oral directions						
	Auditory memory--letters, words, sentences, numbers						
	Other						
MATH	Place value						__ Audio-Visual Aids _____ __ Commercial Kit _____ __ Worksheets/Workbooks __ Centers __ Games __ Manipulatives __ Other _____
	Number facts + -						
	Computation + -						
	Problem solving						
	Measurement--calendar, clock, money						
	Other						
SOCIAL EMOTIONAL	Communication with peers/adults						
	Works independently/uses time wisely						
	Participates in activities/withdrawn behavior						
	Disruptive/inappropriate behavior						
	Self-image						
	Attention span						
	Completes work						
	Other						

*Recommended Strategies (check one or more): Enrichment ☐ Developmental ☐ Preventative ☐

1/PHLP/113.30

NAME _____ TEACHER _____ SCHOOL _____ GRADE 2 DATE _____

CHECK AREAS OF CONCERN		Checks	DATES: Projected Completion	Update	Update	Completion	STUDENT EDUCATIONAL PLAN (SIEP)
VISUAL	Fine motor--pencil grip, drawing, writing						__ Audio-Visual Aids _____
	Visual discrimination--words						__ Commercial Kit _____
	Visual memory--pictures, letters, words, sentences, numbers						__ Worksheets/Workbooks __ Centers
	Reversals/omissions/substitutions						__ Games __ Manipulatives
	Sequencing--pictures, letters, words, sentences, numbers						__ Flash Cards
	Omissions in writing/reading						__ Other _____
	Other						
READING	Word attack						__ Audio-Visual Aids _____
	Vocabulary--verbal, sight						__ Commercial Kit _____
	Comprehension						__ Worksheets/Workbooks __ Centers
	Reference skills						__ Games __ Manipulatives
	Other						__ Flash Cards
							__ Other _____
LANGUAGE	Personal information--name, age, address, etc.						__ Audio-Visual Aids _____
	Appropriate responses/verbal expression						__ Commercial Kit _____
	Grammatical structure--oral/written						__ Worksheets/Workbooks __ Centers
	Written expression						__ Games __ Manipulatives
	Handwriting						__ Flash Cards
	Spelling						__ Other _____
	Other						
AUDITORY	Auditory discrimination--sounds/words						__ Audio-Visual Aids _____
	Following oral directions						__ Commercial Kit _____
	Auditory memory--sounds, letters, words, sentences, numbers						__ Worksheets/Workbooks __ Centers
							__ Games __ Manipulatives
	Other						__ Flash Cards
							__ Other _____
MATH	Place value						__ Audio-Visual Aids _____
	Number facts + - x ÷						__ Commercial Kit _____
	Computation + - x ÷						__ Worksheets/Workbooks __ Centers
	Problem solving						__ Games __ Manipulatives
	Measurement--calendar, clock, money						__ Flash Cards
	Numeration						__ Other _____
	Other						
SOCIAL EMOTIONAL	Communication with peers/adults						
	Works independently/uses time wisely						
	Participates in activities/withdrawn behavior						
	Disruptive/inappropriate behavior						
	Self image						
	Attention span						
	Completes work						
	Other						

*Recommended Strategies (check one or more): Enrichment ☐ Developmental ☐ Preventative ☐

1/PREP/113.3)
07/16/86

APPENDIX F
Teacher Observation Checklist
Second Grade

School Sentiment Survey

1. I like being in school.

2. My teacher cares about me.

3. I like to read in school.

4. I like to draw pictures in school.

5. I like to write stories in school.

6. I like the other children in my class.

7. I like doing math problems at school.

8. I like to learn about science.

9. The other children are friendly toward me.

10. I like to sing songs with my class.

11. I like to learn about other places.

12. Nice things happen at school every day.

13. When I am at school I don't feel lonely.

14. My classmates listen to what I say.

15. There are a lot of things to do at school.

16. I would like to do better in school.

17. I am pretty happy.

18. Someone always has to tell me what to do.

19. I am proud of my school work.

20. School is fun.

APPENDIX H

INITIAL TEACHER SURVEY

1. Have you ever taught summer school in Orange County? _____

   If so, for how many years? _____

2. What is your area of certification? _____

3. How many years have you been teaching? _____

4. Have you ever taught a multi-age classroom? _____

   If so, explain. _____

   _____

   _____

5. What do you anticipate will be the biggest problem with multi-age grouping?

   _____

   _____

6. What do you anticipate will be the greatest advantage of multi-age grouping?

   _____

   _____

7. Would you be interested in teaching a multi-age group during the regular school year? _____ Why/Why not? _____

   _____

   _____

APPENDIX I

Parent Letter

April 1990

Dear Parent:

County Public Schools will provide a Summer Program for selected kindergarten, first and second grade children. Your child has been chosen for this special summer learning experience.

The purpose of the summer session is to strengthen your child's reading, mathematics, and motor development skills. In addition to emphasis on skill development, special activities will be planned that will be both educational and fun. The Summer Program will not determine promotion or retention.

The Summer Program will be held at selected schools. Your child will be attending Elementary School for the summer session. Bus transportation will be provided for all children who live more than two miles from their assigned school.

Dates: June 11 - July 12

Time: 3 hours per day
Monday through Thursday
(4 days a week)

Hours: 8:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Registration Deadline: May 1, 1990

Please complete and return the enclosed registration form and bus schedule form to your child's teacher. If you have questions, please contact your local school or the Early Childhood Office at 423-9234.

SUMMER PROGRAM REGISTRATION FORM

My son/daughter will attend the summer program at ■ Elementary School (■). The classes will begin Monday, June 11, and end on Thursday, July 12. I understand that by registering my child, attendance is required, and I will send my child each day. July 4 is a holiday.

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS FORM TO SCHOOL BY MAY 2

Child's Name: _____ Age: _____ Present Grade: _____

Student Number: _____ _____ _____
(To be completed by school)

Parent's Name: _____

Summer Address: _____
(Please do not write a post office box or route number; we need an address for bus route purposes.)

Phone Number: _____ Work Phone Number: _____

Person to be contacted in case parent can't be reached:

_____ _____
Name Telephone Number

TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION

Transportation will be provided if your child is currently being transported or if he/she will be attending a school other than his/her home school.

I will transport my child _____ yes _____ no

My child currently walks/rides bike to: _____ name of school

See the attached Transportation Form and mark your child's current bus stop. _____ give location

My child will need transportation _____ yes _____ no

Comments: _____

_____

_____

_____

1/PREP/148.10

APPENDIX K

Critical Thinking and Self-Reflection Checklist

The GEM Practicum Internship

John Barell - (Adapted)

Using a scale of 1 to 5, rate your work setting according to the following items:
5=Very Often 4=Often 3=Sometimes 2=Seldom 1=Rarely

CLASSROOM

1.	When students pose unusual or divergent questions, I ask, "What made you think of that?"	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Information in the text is challenged.	5	4	3	2	1
3.	When a decision has to be made between involving the class discussion of an intriguing student idea (topic related) or moving on to "cover" content, I choose the former.	5	4	3	2	1
4.	I encourage participants to seek alternative answers.	5	4	3	2	1
5.	The target group receives positive reinforcement for initiating questions.	5	4	3	2	1
6.	Problems are used as a means for the target group to generate their own questions (or problems), which we then seriously consider.	5	4	3	2	1
7.	Teaching and learning occur without teacher talk.	5	4	3	2	1
8.	Most questions posed during class can be answered with short or one-word answers.	5	4	3	2	1
9.	Students spontaneously engage in critiquing each other's thinking.	5	4	3	2	1
10.	Students are encouraged to relate subject matter to experiences in other subjects or to their personal lives.	5	4	3	2	1

11. I stress how to think, not what to think.	5	4	3	2	1
12. Students often set objectives for their own learning.	5	4	3	2	1
13. Students spend time working collaboratively to solve subject matter questions.	5	4	3	2	1
14. One focus in my implementation is trying to help others understand how and why people (mentioned in texts) created ideas, solutions, experiments, rules, principles, and so on.	5	4	3	2	1
15. Students actively listen to each other.	5	4	3	2	1
16. I facilitate collaborative instructional problem solving.	5	4	3	2	1

APPENDIX L

TEACHER LOG
(Optional)

Name	Area of Concern	Completion Date

APPENDIX M

PARENT SURVEY

We enjoyed having your child in the 1990 summer program. We would appreciate your answering the following questions and returning the form to your child's teacher.

1. Did your child enjoy coming to the summer program? Why/Why not?

_____

_____

_____

2. What did your child like the most during the program? _____

_____

_____

3. What did your child like least about the summer program? _____

_____

_____

4. Do you feel your child made progress this summer? _____

Explain: _____

_____

_____

5. Comments/Suggestions: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

1990 PREP SUMMER SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

1. I liked Summer School.

2. I liked reading, hearing and writing stories about the different states.

3. I learned about many different types of plants, animals, and weather.

4. I learned people live in different places and do many different things.

5. I liked learning and singing songs.

6. I liked moving my body to different rhythms and beats.

7. I liked guessing (estimating) the time in a state; counting; making patterns and solving problems.

8. I liked making and eating my own snacks.

1. What I liked doing most: _____

_____

2. What I think I did best: _____

_____

3. What I'd like to do better: _____

_____

APPENDIX O

FINAL TEACHER SURVEY

1. Were you provided with ample materials, supplies and equipment to implement the curriculum? _____ If no, explain. _____

2. Did the children progress using the curriculum? _____

   If no, explain. _____

3. Have your feelings about multi-age grouping changed? _____

   Explain your answer. _____

4. What did you find to be disadvantages of multi-age grouping? _____

5. What did you find to be advantages of multi-age grouping? _____

6. What changes would you recommend to make multi-age grouping more successful? _____

7. Would you be interested in teaching a multi-age group during the regular school year? _____ Why?/ Why not? _____

8. Comments: _____